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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 2 December 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ALLAREY (Philippines)
(Vice-President)

later: Mr. ELHOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
(Vice-President)

- Question of Palestine [30] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Allarey (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 30 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/47/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/716)

Mr. BATIOUK (Ukraine): This year's consideration of the agenda item "Question of Palestine" is taking place in an atmosphere of both hope and frustration. On the one hand, we are witnessing fundamental changes in the international political environment, the shift from confrontation to cooperation and the renewed determination to work towards the resolution of long-standing regional conflicts. On the other hand, the international community is facing mounting challenges in various parts of the globe, including the Middle East, that call for concerted efforts.

Ukraine welcomed the convening of the Peace Conference on the Middle East at Madrid, on 30 October 1991, and the subsequent bilateral and multilateral talks, as significant steps towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in that highly volatile region. While welcoming the peace process and expressing the hope that it will lead to substantive results, we cannot ignore the fact that the occupation continues, buttressed by harsh, repressive measures, causing serious suffering and hardship among Palestinians and a vicious circle of violence in the region.

In its report (A/47/35) the Committee noted with deep concern that the Palestinian people had paid dearly for the occupation with loss of life, loss of land and natural resources and severe restrictions on their political,

(Mr. Batiouk, Ukraine)

civil, economic, social and cultural rights. The plight of the Palestinians calls urgently for immediate international action.

We welcome the peace process launched a year ago on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the "land for peace" formula. The delegation of Ukraine expresses its sincere hope that this process will bring about the long-awaited settlement of the question of Palestine - the core of the conflict in the Middle East - on the basis of internationally recognized principles. We should like to emphasize that these principles must include the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination.

Today's unprecedented and historic opportunity to turn the page in the Middle East should not be missed, and it is hoped that the parties concerned will be able to overcome the obstacles in the way of advancement towards the common objective of a just and lasting peace in the region.

In the view of the Ukrainian delegation, there is a continued need for an even more active role by the United Nations, the Security Council and the Secretary-General, to bring about a successful outcome of the peace process. We are convinced that the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General to the multilateral negotiations in the framework of the Middle East peace talks will provide additional momentum in this regard.

Pending progress towards a political settlement, it is of the utmost importance to ensure the immediate protection of the Palestinians in the

(Mr. Batiouk, Ukraine)

occupied territories. The Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the intifadah, has proved that the Palestinian people will continue to reject the Israeli occupation and will continue to struggle for the exercise of their human, national and political rights.

Despite certain steps by the new Israeli Government to improve the situation in the occupied territories, which we welcome, the international community, basing its response on the current situation, should once again call on Israel to recognize the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the occupied Palestinian territory and to implement its provisions and those of the various human rights instruments to which it is a party. It is now all the more urgent for the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention and for the United Nations system as a whole to take actions to ensure that Israel abides by its obligations as the occupying Power, in accordance with Security Council resolution 681 (1990).

One of the most pressing issues, and one requiring the constant attention of the international community, is the Israeli policy of confiscating land and building new settlements, including those for newly arrived Jewish immigrants, in the occupied territories. We share the concern over such policies and practices pursued by Israel inasmuch as a number of those settlers have come from Ukraine. The General Assembly, in our opinion, should once again call upon the occupying Power to abandon this policy and thus remove one of the major obstacles towards the successful completion of the peace talks. The partial freeze is a positive development but can be considered only as a first step.

(Mr. Batiouk, Ukraine)

The year 1992 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the occupation. It is evident, however, that all those long years have not done away with the determination of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights, nor have they erased the determination of the international community to continue to support and assist them in their just cause. In this connection, the delegation of Ukraine would like to recognize the important contribution to this effort by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under the able leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal. We are of the view that the Committee plays an important role in the heightening of international awareness of the question of Palestine and in monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. It is also a valuable forum for helping advance the peace process, the prospect of a just peace in the Middle East and a lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Batiouk, Ukraine)

From my own first-hand experience I can assure the General Assembly that the Committee's activities provide a unique forum for a profound exchange of views and opinions between representatives from different countries. That is why we have found very valuable indeed the programme of regional seminars, symposiums and international meetings of non-governmental organizations in which Palestinians, Israelis and experts from all parts of the world have participated. These and other activities which have been undertaken under the guidance of the Committee have contributed significantly to the greater understanding of the question of Palestine throughout the world. We hope that this important body will continue to receive the necessary resources to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I should like to assure the Assembly that Ukraine for its part will continue to give its full support to the active and consistent efforts of the United Nations aimed at restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We firmly believe that a unique opportunity now exists for the achievement of a just peace in the Middle East on the basis of international law and in conformity with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): Since the General Assembly discussed this agenda item at its last session, new developments have taken place in the Middle East. They lead us to be cautiously optimistic as to the possibility of making progress towards a negotiated, comprehensive and just settlement to the question of Palestine.

However, the pace of those developments that give rise to hope is still slow and hurdles still obstruct the march towards a solution. This is cause

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

for concern regarding the fate of the process and the possibility of achieving the positive results we look forward to.

The rulers of Israel in its previous Government were a group of people who subscribed to an expansionist ideology that took its point of departure from the belief in the impossibility of replacing war by peace in Israel's relations with its neighbours. Therefore, they did all they could to impede the peace process in which they were forced to take part without any genuine desire to arrive at a comprehensive and lasting peace. That is why the peace process has been stalled since last October's Madrid Conference.

We do hope the new Government of Israel will make a fresh start and a genuine contribution towards the achievement of the desired goals of the peace process, namely, the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the essence of which is the principle of land for peace.

Given this optimism regarding the peace process, we do hope also that once the new American administration is installed next January, it will deploy efforts worthy of our commendation to achieve the desired goals after which all justice- and peace-loving peoples in the Middle East aspire. Those people hope to see further activity in advancing the peace process to achieve its desired goals within the defined framework to which the American administration is contributing. We do thank the American administration for its efforts.

The goal is not for the peace process to be an end in itself, but lies rather in the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region based on the restoration of the national rights of the

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

Palestinian people and Israel's complete withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories. These are the foundations which may produce real results that could become permanent; we must not miss the historic opportunity afforded by all the major international efforts that are finally beginning to bear fruit, after a long and arduous labour, by bringing all the parties to the Israeli-Arab conflict to the same negotiating table.

The Arab and Palestinian parties have shown commendable flexibility as their contribution to the success of the peace process and to putting the negotiations on a track that adapts to the new concepts and current principles of international relations. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine, in his statement before this Assembly, highlighted the approach of the Palestinian party and underscored a number of facts regarding the many inputs by the Palestinian side.

The aim of all the forces of good in our world is to ensure the continuity of the peace process. This goal was stated clearly by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in its report to the General Assembly (A/47/35) at its current session. It is incumbent upon us all to spare no effort in trying to achieve this desired goal. It will be possible to achieve this goal, mo matter how long the negotiations may take, especially now that humanity has made the most important development in its long history: the end of the cold war, the disappearance of bipolarity and the shift from confrontation and rivalry to understanding and cooperation.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

We all know how the Middle East region and its peoples have suffered as a result of the cold war and the intransigence and extremism that led to continuous conflicts in which many lives were lost and enormous resources were wasted, just because that part of the region fell prey to the dangerous illusion that flexibility and understanding are not needed and that force was the only way.

The report of the aforementioned Committee has made it abundantly clear that the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories have suffered greatly because of continuing Israeli repressive measures and arbitrary actions that violate the norms of international law and United Nations resolutions. The said Committee has denounced in particular Israel's continued reliance on military force to suppress the intifadah and deplored the acts of repression and the suffering inflicted upon the Palestinian sons of the intifadah as a result of that Israeli posture.

It is incumbent upon us here to reiterate that Israel must be made to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The international community has a duty to compel Israel to comply with this Convention. Therefore, specific steps and measures must be taken to guarantee Israel's respect for and implementation of the Convention.

It is necessary to put an end to Israeli oppression as reflected in its continued reckless policy of annexation and settlement in all the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds, and in its untiring efforts to alter the Arab and Islamic character of the city. It is no secret to any reasonable man that what Israel is trying to do through its

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

attempts is to dismember the West Bank, destroy the social fabric of the Palestinian people, and inflict yet more suffering upon the Palestinians in those territories. They are deprived of opportunities for employment, of their right of movement, and are subjected to heavy collective punishments, such as the closing of their schools and universities for long periods of time. All this makes the lives of the Palestinians a dark, unbearable hell, devoid of human light.

My country affirms its absolute support for the intifadah of the valiant Palestinian people and their continued resistance to the Israeli occupation and Israeli practices which have been condemned by the United Nations and world public opinion. Furthermore, we hope that very soon we will see the dawn of the day when the valiant Palestinian people will enjoy freedom and independence after their long suffering and that there will be a just settlement to the problems of the Palestinian people. We hope that all the countries of the Middle East will enjoy peace so that they may be able to create a future of justice and cooperation with a view to achieving the noble goals and higher objectives called for by the Charter of the United Nations which affirms the equal rights of all Members of the United Nations.

Mr. MAHDI (Pakistan): The Middle East today stands at a crossroads. The positive international political environment provides a setting conducive to the search for genuine peace. We are encouraged by some of the recent developments in and around the region. The parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict remain engaged in the Middle East peace negotiations. While durable peace seems to be within reach, the road to peace is still fraught with dangers, in view of the very complex situation on the ground. At this critical moment it is essential for the international community to make a

(Mr. Mahdi, Pakistan)

concerted effort to encourage the parties not only to maintain but also to increase the pace of this process. An indefinite stalemate would be a major set-back for the peace talks.

The determination to resolve this long-standing conflict needs to be accompanied and strengthened by concrete measures if the process is to succeed. It is a matter of concern that the people of Palestine continue to make tremendous sacrifices in the struggle for liberty and a life of dignity. The denial of their right to self-determination lies at the core of the Middle East conflict. Pakistan shares the view that durable peace in the region hinges on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The realization of this right could constitute the foundation-stone on which the edifice of a just and lasting peace can be successfully erected.

Unfortunately, violence continues to plague the region. We note with regret that the conditions in which the people of Palestine live remain critical. Violations of human rights continue in the occupied territories. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of Palestinians living in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, must be fully respected and protected in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

(Mr. Mahdi, Pakistan)

With some modifications, Israel continues the implementation of its settlements policy, which is widely regarded as an effort to change the demographic composition of the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is generally agreed that this policy is a major impediment to international efforts aimed at achieving durable peace. There is an urgent need to bring an immediate end to the settlement policy in the occupied territories. That would represent the single most important contribution to the Middle East peace process.

Pakistan, like many other countries, is keenly awaiting the outcome of the current Middle East Peace Conference. We are justified in our expectation that peace, which has so far eluded the Middle East, will finally be translated into reality, marking the end of a chapter on one of the most bitter conflicts of the post-Second-World-War era.

The people of Palestine look to the international community for the fulfilment of their legitimate hopes and aspirations. The just settlement of this conflict on the basis of the restitution of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions would pave the way for a lasting peace in the region, a peace which would respect and guarantee the right of all peoples in the region to live in harmony, to lead a life of dignity and honour.

The international community must not allow this moment of hope to fade away, as such moments have done in the past. The present opportunity for a fair and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict and the

(Mr. Mahdi, Pakistan)

Palestinian issue must not be squandered. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provide an adequate framework for such a settlement on the basis of the principle of "land for peace". The failure to grasp this opportunity would have grave implications not only for the peoples of the region but also for international peace and security. The price of failure would, indeed, be prohibitive.

Allow me in conclusion to reiterate my delegation's firm belief that it is only in an environment of peace and trust that all peoples will be able to pursue their primary goal of economic prosperity and social well-being. In short, there is no substitute for peace and a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict and the Palestine issue.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): The question of Palestine, which remains unresolved, is the most persistent travesty of justice in the Middle East. The sacred land of Palestine and its holy centre of Bitolmoghaddas, Jerusalem, which commands particular respect among the followers of the three divine religions, continue to suffer under aggression and occupation. The people of Palestine continue to live under circumstances in which the torture of innocent people, the imposition of collective punishment, the uprooting of the indigenous population through the establishment of new settlements, and other aggressive policies are carried out on a daily basis by the Zionist regime.

Many documents, including the report of the Secretary General (A/47/294), the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/47/13), the report

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinians People (A/47/35) and the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/47/509), provide ample descriptions of the systematic brutality and violence which have become the hallmark of the practices and policies of the Zionist regime in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In recent decades numerous United Nations documents have condemned the inhuman and brutal activities of the occupying forces. It is regrettable, however, that the response of the occupying authorities to these calls has been nothing but to persist in their violations of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and strengthen further their violent policies and measures, which include the punitive demolition and sealing of dwellings, murder, arrests and detentions, collective punishment, moral coercion and interference with medical and educational services.

According to the latest report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA,

"121 Palestinians were killed in clashes with the Israeli security forces in the occupied territories. An additional 5,500 sought emergency medical attention in local hospitals". (A/47/13, para. 4)

The report also indicates that

"Between February and May 1992 alone, out of a total of 54 Palestinians killed in the occupied territory, 21 were killed by Israel military personnel operating under cover". (ibid., para. 5)

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Even more alarming is the significant increase in the number of casualties among children in the territories. In the first four years of the intifadah, approximately 33 per cent of the 1,015 Palestinians killed were 17 years old or under. That percentage of those killed rose from 31.6 per cent in the third year to 37.6 per cent last year. The largest percentage of these children, 26.5 per cent of the total number killed in the fourth year, were between 11 and 16 years of age.

Furthermore, the situation of detainees has continued to become more critical. The report of the Special Committee notes that

"According to the estimate of the Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre, over 120,000 persons have been arrested and held for over 24 hours since the beginning of the uprising. In 1991 alone, the Centre believes that over 20,000 Palestinians were arrested and held for over 24 hours. From the testimonies it has heard recently, the Committee has noted a further deterioration in the status and treatment of prisoners, which is characterized by systematic torture and both physical and psychological ill-treatment, such as deprivation of food and sleep, being tied up in painful positions and in extremely reduced spaces".

(A/47/509, para. 807)

The report of the Special Committee explicitly notes that the human rights situation of Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories remains a matter of utmost concern for the international community.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The vital role that education can play to improve the cultural, scientific and social standard of life in the occupied territories is indisputable. The report of the Commissioner General of UNRWA (A/47/13) notes that school closures continued to be a significant problem in the occupied territory. UNRWA West Bank schools lost 17 per cent of school days, while Gaza schools lost 12 per cent, owing mainly to curfews, military closures and general strikes. During the reporting period, the four UNRWA training centres in the occupied territory lost 20 per cent of their education days. Clearly, the inhumane practices of the occupying forces have adversely affected educational services in the occupied territories.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The creation of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, in contravention of all international rules and norms, is another matter of grave concern. The report of the Secretary-General on the economic and social consequences thereof (A/47/294) indicates that on the basis of laws and regulations enacted by the occupiers more than 52 per cent of the total land area of the West Bank, 42.3 per cent of the total land area of the Gaza Strip, and 69.4 per cent of the total land area of the Syrian Golan Heights have been confiscated to fulfil plans of the occupying authorities, and Palestinian towns and villages have been encircled and isolated under the plans for the development of settlements. In this regard the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/47/13) states that more than 50 per cent of the land in the West Bank and 40 per cent in Gaza was reserved for Israeli military or civilian use, and a series of military orders and planning regulations restricted Palestinian use of the remaining area. Furthermore, in its latest report (A/47/509) the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories states:

> "The policy Israel has pursued in this regard has led to a further intensification of settlement activity through the expropriation of land and the transfer of Israeli citizens, particularly of recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to the occupied territories." (A/47/509, para. 792)

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The report goes on to state that on 12 September 1991

> "the rate of settlement development in the territories was at that time three times higher than the rate that had been announced by the Minister of Housing of the Zionist regime". (A/47/509, para. 793)

The continuation of this policy not only entails outright disregard for the legitimate rights of Palestinians but also creates an atmosphere of insecurity and instability in the whole region, thus endangering overall international peace and security.

In the face of such brutalities the Palestinians have decided to confront the aggression with their popular uprising. As such, the intifadah is not only a natural response to these inhuman measures but also the inevitable fact of history, the history of a nation rising up with bare hands against a most brutal enemy armed with ruthlessness and sophisticated weapons. Though the history of this struggle goes back decades, the new chapter - that is, the intifadah - was opened on 8 December 1987 as the natural reaction of the oppressed people of Palestine.

More than a year has passed since the opening of the Madrid Conference, a year during which nothing has been accomplished save the realization of the desires of the Zionist régime. That is why the Islamic Republic of Iran has been skeptical about this trend in the first place, an attitude shared by some of the concerned parties. Since the Madrid Conference the Zionist régime has been trying to portray itself as a peace-loving régime while at the same time it has continued its occupation of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights and increased its repression and inhumane acts in the occupied territories. Therefore, in light of the above it would be a mistake to assume that such a trend will lead to materialization of the rights of Palestinians.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Iran, aware of the aspirations of the Moslem people of Palestine, has since its establishment supported their legitimate struggle to restore their rights. In our view a just and lasting solution to the issue of Palestine can be achieved by the full restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent State in the entire land of Palestine. The oppressed Palestinian people have been expecting the international community to help them achieve their lofty goals.

Mr. VASILYEV (Belarus) (interpretation from Russian): The General Assembly's consideration of the question of Palestine at this session is taking place against the background of profound changes on the international scene - the end of the cold war, the transition from confrontation to cooperation. In our view, this creates a propitious climate for the redoubling of efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestine problem, which is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is an important fact that the international community has arrived at a consensus with regard to the main principles of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, which includes Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories, respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries and recognition and implementation of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination.

It is also generally recognized that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) remain the political basis for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, it is understood that

(Mr. Vasilyev, Belarus)

the conflict cannot be settled by military means and that the only way to solve the problem is the negotiating process.*

The international community therefore welcomed the convening at Madrid of the Peace Conference on the Middle East and the bilateral and multilateral negotiations that have followed, exressing its hope that those negotiations would make it possible to move forward towards concrete settlements of the key problems underlying the conflict. Although it is difficult at present to speak of concrete results along that line, the very fact that the parties concerned have sat down at the negotiating table is a positive achievement.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus expresses the sincere hope that those negotiations will be more productive in the future and will play a significant role in achieving peace in the region and settling the Palestine problem. We regard as appropriate the appeal by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the present Government of Israel to give a positive reply to the Palestinian proposals and to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination.

Up to now, as evidenced by the documents submitted and the statements made by many delegations during this session, Israel's policy with regard to the Arab population in the occupied territories has continued to be in flagrant violation of accepted principles of international law, in particular

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* Mr. Elhouderi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Vasilyev, Belarus)

of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Our delegation supports the appeal of the Committee to the Israeli Government to take measures to put an end to the repression, to halt all activities entailing land confiscation and the creation of settlements, to put an end to its policy of expulsion and administrative detention, to restore civil rights and to rescind military orders used for controlling all areas of the daily lives of Palestinians.

The United Nations has made a significant contribution to the search for ways and means to settle the problem of Palestine. The Organization's efforts have led to the adoption of many resolutions setting forth the legal, political and humanitarian bases of a Middle East settlement, taking into account the legitimate interests of the people of Palestine. At this juncture the active participation of the United Nations, the Security Council and the Secretary-General in the Middle East peace process is an important condition for success. In that connection we welcome the appointment of the Ambassador of India, Mr. Gharekhan, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative at the multilateral negotiations.

(Mr. Vasilyev, Belarus)

We agree with most of the delegations that have spoken here, expressing their hope that the negotiations will lead to an agreement fulfilling the aspirations of all parties concerned and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Republic of Belarus would like to note the considerable work done by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to express its gratitude to the Committee's Chairman, Ambassador Cissé of Senegal.

Mr. BURCUOĞLU (Turkey) (interpretation from French): The General Assembly has once again been called upon to consider the question of Palestine, which has for over 45 years, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, been a source of continued concern to the international community, in view of the magnitude of the suffering of the Palestinian people and the seriousness of the threat that this question constitutes for peace and security in the Middle East.

Owing to its geographical location and its historic ties to the Middle East, Turkey has a particular interest in the fate of the peoples of that region, and particularly in the fate of the Palestinian people. The question of Palestine is one of the most complex problems that the United Nations has had to consider. It is not merely a question of refugees or mass violations of human rights. While it has various aspects, the Palestinian problem is first and foremost a political problem at the very core of the question of the Middle East. For that reason, we are convinced that any initiative aimed at finding a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East must be based on the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people, as well as the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned.

(Mr. Burcuoğlu, Turkey)

A solution to the Palestinian problem must be based on the following fundamental prerequisites: Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its fundamental rights; recognition by Israelis and Palestinians of each side's existence, rights and obligations in accordance with the purposes and principles of international law and legitimacy; and recognition of the right to security of all States in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and internationally recognized borders.

A little over one year ago the Peace Conference on the Middle East, convened at Madrid, rekindled the flame of hope for a just and lasting peace in the region. We are pleased to note that the peace process is continuing at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

In view of past difficulties, mistrust and deep-rooted suspicions and of a long period of hostility and repeated conflicts, optimism in this new process is tempered by prudence and even a sense of doubt. But that in no way reduces the undeniable political will demonstrated by all the parties concerned when they sat down at the conference table.

The path will be long and strewn with obstacles that seem difficult to overcome. In order to surmount them, all of the parties must demonstrate courage and political wisdom. Compromises will surely be necessary. Turkey believes that if this unique opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement is missed, there will be serious consequences for the population of the region, which has already had a painful experience, and for international peace and security.

Turkey views the Peace Conference on the Middle East as a historic opportunity and fully supports it. We are convinced that the international

(Mr. Burcuoğlu, Turkey)

community and the United Nations should spare no effort to encourage and support all parties in their search for a lasting peace in the region. The United Nations bears historic and collective responsibilities towards the Palestinian people. Hence it must remain continuously involved until all aspects of the question of Palestine are settled satisfactorily and the legitimate rights recognized by the international community are respected. The invitation extended to the United Nations to participate as an extra-regional Power in working groups of the Peace Conference is an important and encouraging step in that direction.

Until a comprehensive settlement is achieved, the security of the Palestinian people will remain a source of concern for the international community. Regrettably, this year, as in earlier years, the reports of various United Nations agencies and other organizations and special committees leave no doubt whatever regarding the difficulties that the Palestinian people continues to experience. The reports submitted by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories provide a detailed account of the flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Israeli authorities have continued to take severe measures against the civilian population, including collective punishment such as curfews, punitive demolition of housing, expropriation of land and arbitrary arrests.

Turkey believes that so long as a peaceful settlement has not been reached and so long as the territories are still occupied, the Fourth Geneva Convention will be applicable to those territories. Since one of the main

(Mr. Burcuoğlu, Turkey)

objectives of the 1949 Geneva Convention is the protection of civilians under occupation, we continue to believe that measures to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians living under Israeli occupation must be considered. We call upon Israel to recognize the de jure applicability of that Convention in the territories it has been occupying since 1967 and to respect the provisions laid down in Security Council resolutions 673 (1990) and 681 (1990).

We are convinced that the peace process must be accompanied by confidence-building measures that will alleviate tension and improve the general climate in the region. In that connection, we are gratified to note the recent decision adopted by the Israeli Government to release some Palestinian political prisoners, ease restrictions on travel, open some sealed houses and limit settlement activity in the occupied territories. We attach particular importance to those measures and hope that they will be followed by others aimed at improving the daily life of Palestinian refugees.

A new Government is now in power in Israel. In the latest elections in that country the majority of voters, by electing a new Government, clearly demonstrated their hope for peace and tranquillity.

All of the parties concerned with the peace process, particularly Israel, must recognize the importance of the propitious environment in the region for compromise and conciliation. They must take advantage of the favourable momentum to move forward towards a comprehensive and equitable solution of the problem of the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. HUARAKA (Namibia): The unlawful use of force, selective summary executions, punitive beatings, torture, deportation, unlawful destruction of property, and collective punishment, including demolition of houses, curfews

(Mr. Huaraka, Namibia)

and the closing of educational institutions, constitute a violation not only of the Fourth Geneva Convention but also of the basic norms of international humanitarian law, as well as international law. Peace and security prevail anywhere in the world only when States abide by the norms of international law. My delegation deplores such persistent violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, which the Security Council has correctly declared to be applicable de jure to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.

(Mr. Huaraka, Namibia)

Reviewing the effects of the Israeli occupation of Palestine for 25 years, since the 1967 war, we see that the Palestinians have paid dearly for the occupation with the loss of lives, loss of land and natural resources and severe restrictions on their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

Last year the Assembly revoked resolution 3379 (XXX), which equated Zionism with racism. Many delegations, including mine, hoped then that with the revocation of that resolution things would change. But our hopes were dashed: nothing has changed in the lives of the Palestinian people.

The Assembly has before it the report (A/47/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Reacting to developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the Chairman of the Committee, in communications to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council, has drawn their attention on a number of occasions to the urgent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory. To emphasize my point, let me quote from the Committee's report:

> "The Chairman condemned the resumption by Israel of its policy of deportations as well as the indiscriminate shooting of demonstrators by the army, and the intensification and expansion of collective punishment such as the imposition of curfews and mass detention of Palestinian civilians, including minors. The Chairman pointed out that those policies and practices were in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and requested that Israel accept the de jure applicability of that Convention to all the territories occupied since 1967 and abide scrupulously by the provisions of that Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions. The Chairman appealed urgently to the

(Mr. Huaraka, Namibia)

Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council and to all parties concerned, in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, to take all necessary measures for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under occupation and to intensify all efforts towards the achievement of a peaceful settlement." (A/47/35, para. 31)

My delegation endorses that just and reasonable position of the Committe on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and wishes once again to congratulate its Chairman and his colleagues in the Bureau.

My delegation supports resolution 726 (1992), adopted unanimously by the Security Council, by which the Council strongly condemned the decision of Israel, the occupying Power, to resume the deportation of Palestinian civilians.

Yes, we agree that the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing, would contribute to the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

In his statement on 6 October, to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, my Foreign Minister, the Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab, said:

"Likewise, Namibia has always held the view that the political aspirations, and in particular the right to self-determination, of the Palestinian people, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), are at the core of the conflict in the Middle East. Here we include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, in accordance with

(Mr. Huaraka, Namibia)

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 383 (1973). The season of peace and dialogue has arrived. In the present circumstances, that is the only viable and sensible game in town. If a face-to-face meeting between the President of Syria and the Prime Minister of Israel will give further impetus to the Middle East peace process and pave the way towards a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement, Namibia will strongly encourage such a historic undertaking within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)." (A/47/PV.26, p. 23)

Finally, with the end of the cold war all sources of international conflicts are now amenable to serious, genuine consideration and negotiations. The atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion should be replaced by, at least, accommodation, and preferably by mutual trust. In this regard, my delegation would urge that the Palestinian negotiating team from the occupied territories be free to travel to and from the talks without hindrance. Let us hope that this time all parties to the process are seriously committed to solving the dispute once and for all and that peace - a peace based on the principles of international law and not on military force - will finally return to the tortured lands of the Middle East.

Mr. MALIK (Iraq) (interpretation from Arabic): The discussion on the question of Palestine at this session acquires special significance from recognition of the need to continue to consider this important question in the Assembly. Recognition of this need to remain seized of the question at this and subsequent stages, reflects the profound concern arising from the escalating attempts to decouple the organic link between the question of Palestine and the United Nations. Recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to

(Mr. Malik, Iraq)

self-determination and the establishment of an independent State, has been and continues to embody the fundamental foundations of principle upon which the United Nations was established and for the realization of which the Organization has striven in all the resolutions it has adopted over many years in consonance with the will of the international community and the position of that community vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. In so doing, the United Nations acted within the principles of its Charter and in accordance with the norms of international law and legality.

The resolutions of the United Nations have condemned the Zionist occupation of Palestinian and the other Arab territories. They have condemned and called for an end to this illegal occupation. They have condemned the policy of violence, oppression and terrorism pursued by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people. They have condemned the policy of building settlements in the occupied territories. For many years, the whole of the international community has championed and supported the rights of the Palestinian people and has entrusted the United Nations with an essential and principal task of reaching a final, just and comprehensive solution to this question.

(Mr. Malik, Iraq)

The history of the question of Palestine clearly shows that the main objective of Zionist policy is the liquidation of the Palestinian question. In pursuing this policy, with the constant support of the United States of America, Israel has sought in a persistent and escalating fashion to prevent the United Nations from playing any role in solving the problem. This was made abundantly clear by the rejection of United Nations resolutions calling for the convening of the international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations and also by the marginal role allotted to the United Nations at the so-called peace conference.

This endeavour has not developed separately from the other axis of this aggressive policy. Rather, it is organically linked to this other axis - namely, the attempt to deprive the Palestinian question of its Arab national dimension and to replace that dimension by the Zionist portrayal of the Palestinian question as a mere problem of refugees in need of repatriation or a mere problem of inhabitants of the territories Zionists call Judea and Samaria, instead of the real name: the West Bank. With the passage of time, this would make it possible to achieve the objective of obliterating the identity of the Palestinian people, and of stripping it of its vital attributes as a living people and reducing it to a mere minority in Israeli society. Within this context, the Zionist entity insists on the annulment of the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, regardless of the fact that the international community recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and insists that it should participate on an equal footing with other parties in any efforts or

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negotiations to resolve the question of Palestine. On the other hand, Israel persists in holding on to the occupied Arab territories and continues to occupy those territories and to go on building settlements on them, and thereby categorically rejects the principle of land for peace.

If Israel is allowed to achieve these aggressive objectives, its success will have only one outcome: the liquidation of the Palestinian question and, at the same time, the perpetuation of the illegal Zionist occupation of the other Arab territories and the consecration of the principle of the acquisition of land by force in the occupied territories. It will also result in the continued denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Is it not right for us then to ask, yet once again, the same questions we find ourselves forced to ask time and time again in this gathering, about the meaning of the false pretensions and hollow declamations by the United States of America and its allies on such things as the rule of law, the so-called new world order and international legality? The assassination by garrotting of the question of Palestine and of the cause of the Palestinian people after so many years of bitter struggle, suffering and sacrifice, after the martyrdom of so many, brands with the mark of Cain all those who sponsor and those who support this act of assassination. It is a scandal for the exponents of the so-called new world order that lays bare the bitter reality we must face: namely that the whole thing boils down to stark injustice and the drive to realize the colonial interests of those States whose aim is to control and dominate the Arab homeland, to plunder and exploit its resources, and to perpetuate its backwardness and state of dependence.

(Mr. Malik, Iraq)

This brings to mind what was called the Gulf crisis which, in spite of everything that was said, was nothing but a plot to destroy Iraq as an independent Arab force, so as to create conditions conducive to imposing the American and Israeli will on the Arab nation, to sell out the interests of the Arab nation and especially to liquidate the Palestinian question.

When aggression was being perpetrated against Iraq, voices were suddenly raised with a lot of talk about international legality and the important role of the United Nations and the need to implement Security Council resolutions. Aggression against Iraq is now vaunted as one of the aspects of the new era of international relations in the post-cold-war period, a feature of the so-called new world order, a manifestation of the tendency to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, an aspect of the struggle against the degradation of the environment and a sample of the upholding of the rule of law and a lot of other hollow slogans.

However, after the destruction of Iraq, and after the imposition of the immoral, inhuman and unprecedented blockade against the Iraqi people, that talk, with all its declamations and slogans disappeared overnight. Now we hear a new tune, a new kind of talk: for when it comes to addressing the Zionist occupation of the Palestinian Arab territories, the role of the United Nations disappears and all of a sudden its presence becomes completely irrelevant. The need to implement Security Council resolutions also evaporates; whether in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Charter or with any other chapter, no one speaks any more of international legality or the rule of law or the imposition of blockades. No one speaks of Israel's stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction or the danger posed by its nuclear arsenal. No

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one even hints at the racist policy pursued by the authorities of the Zionist entity against Palestinians under occupation. No one condemns the policies of murder, deportation and demolition of houses. Indeed, the exact opposite takes place. The advocates of so-called democracy heap praise upon Israel and its racist policies, and instead of urging or forcing it to implement United Nations resolutions, of which there are dozens, they call for those resolutions to be repealed, especially the just resolution 3379 (XXX) of 1975, which quite rightly equated Zionism with racism.

(Mr. Malik, Iraq)

Instead of imposing sanctions on Israel because of its rejection of United Nations resolutions, they increase the material and political support they extend to Israel and cover up its nuclear arsenals.

The unlimited support of the racist-Zionist entity by the United States and its allies is the most telling example of the policy of double standards and irrefutable evidence of the hollowness of the so-called new world order, which is no order at all because it has no firm stable foundations and no unified standards or criteria. Nor is it international because it is not a world order that represents the totality of the intentional community but an order that represents only the will of the United States of America and its allies. Nor is it new because, very simply, it is a regression to the hated era of imperialism. It is neither an order, nor is it international and it is not new. The truth, if the truth is to be told, is that the peoples of the world, as reflected in the statements by many of the delegations at this Assembly aspire after a new world order that would be founded on the principles of right and justice, a true world order in which all would be equal without discrimination.

The policy of the iron fist, nuclear superiority, and racial discrimination against the Palestinian people; the policy of the dismemberment of the Arab nation, its weakening, the perpetuation of its backwardness, the sell-out of its national interests and the imposition of the status quo upon it, will never succeed in achieving its objectives.

Undoubtedly, the persistence of the American Administration and Zionist forces in claiming success for their designs is only ephemeral and certainly does not represent the truth of what is happening in the Arab world. Very simply, we believe that we are all one Arab nation, a nation with deep roots, like all other nations, a nation which does not accept occupation, rejects

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foreign domination and insists on regaining its legitimate rights to land, to wealth and to dignity.

The delegation of Iraq, proceeding from the humanitarian and national principles in which we believe, reaffirms once again Iraq's unswerving support for the Palestinian people in its struggle to attain its inalienable right and in supporting the heroic intifadah in the occupied territories against the Zionist occupiers. We also consider that the Palestinian cause is the Arab's foremost cause and the core of the conflict in the region. We are convinced that the only solution is the ending of Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent State on its national soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. This is the only road that will lead the region to lasting peace, security and prosperity. There is no other way.

Mr. GHAFOORZAI (Afghanistan): The conflict in the Middle East, which has been going on for almost half a century, has had as its basis the question of Palestine. The United Nations, almost since it came into existence, has been engaged in restoring the usurped rights of the Palestinian people, in order to enable them to exercise, like all other peoples of the world, their just right to self-determination and to a homeland. This Organization has yet to see any tangible progress being made towards the achievement of this objective. A generation of innocent Palestinians has been subjected to an unlawful situation and numerous types of atrocities by the Israeli aggression and its occupation forces. In the past year, however, some hopes have been raised that long-term and stable progress can be made in regard to the issue under consideration. The new, non-confrontational atmosphere for dealing with

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

the problems prevailing in the world would be greatly strengthened by a peaceful and just end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and the termination of the state of war in the region.

Over a year ago in Madrid the first phase of the Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened. This initiative was applauded by the world community in general, and hopes were raised that there would be a final and speedy end to the Palestinian question. Unfortunately, after a year of dialogue and numerous rounds of meetings the world has not witnessed true and fundamental progress towards a solution to the dire situation in Palestine.

The delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan appreciates the work done by the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Palestinian People, and the humanitarian services the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is continuing to provide the Palestinian people. Afghanistan, as a member of the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will continue to play an active role in the achievement of the Committee's objectives. My delegation, however, notes with regret that this year, which also marks the twenty-fifth year of the occupation of Palestine by Israeli forces, we have witnessed the death of over 120 Palestinian civilians at the hands of Israeli security and military forces. More than 5,000 Palestinians have been injured, some severely. The number of detainees and prisoners has not decreased; in fact, there are well over 25,000 Palestinians in various detention centres and prisons inside Israel and in occupied Palestine.

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

In view of all this, we are left with no choice but to view with cynicism and scepticism the intentions of the Israeli Government in its dealings with the Palestinians.

The lack of true progress on the initiatives of the Peace Conference on the Middle East is based on Israel's refusal to put into effect the logical - and, I may add, only - solution to the question of Palestine: recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinians to the existence of a Palestinian State; in other words, the principle of land for peace. In addition, Israel's refusal to abide by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) is hampering the progress of the peace talks. Moreover, Israel's harassment and repression of the Palestinian population have not stopped, but indeed have increased, with the demolition of Palestinian-owned houses and businesses. Israel has continued to subject the Palestinian population to physical and psychological strain.

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

It is with regret that my delegation notes these atrocities of the Israeli Government, bearing in mind that in June 1992 the majority of voters in that country voted for peace and against violence. The beacon of hope that was coming from Israel in June faded out fast and is being gradually replaced by the dark and oppressive policies of the past. Is not peace for the benefit of all inhabitants of the region? When the world is trying to set its sights on peace, why is Israel setting its sights on Palestinian destruction and putting its finger on the trigger?

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, as the inheritor of a country that for 14 long years was occupied by a foreign force and was deprived of its freedom and human dignity, fully shares the plight of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We not only sympathize with them, but consider their struggle our own.

My delegation subscribes to the idea that the United Nations should try to play an active role in bringing about a transitional period of self-government to be followed by a process leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif - East Jerusalem - as its capital. By virtue of historic realities, the Security Council has a responsibility to make sure that the issue of Jerusalem is an integral component of the current peace talks.

As we convey our appreciation to the United Nations, we also request that Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 681 (1990) be fully implemented. We believe that these measures will have the best chance of being heeded if a United Nations observer team is stationed in Israel and in occupied Palestine. The United Nations, as the world community's representative body, should not - must not - remain indifferent and idle in the face of such abuses by Israel.

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

In few places on Earth do we witness such flagrant violation of the rights of a nation, and in even fewer instances do we see such lack of action on the part of the world body as a whole to address such breaches of international norms and laws.

We express the hope that the next United States Administration which will come into office in a month's time, will energetically follow the political initiative taken by the current Administration, which led to the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference. This initiative could lay a solid foundation for meaningful Arab-Israeli negotiations aimed at bringing about a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis.

The bilateral negotiations that were begun in Washington could complement the Madrid Peace Conference if the Arab side's sincerity and readiness for cooperation were meaningfully reciprocated. However, attempts by Israel to procrastinate in the face of this opportunity would disturb the atmosphere of confidence that was created before these bilateral negotiations. Such an approach could undoubtedly prolong the illegal situation in the Middle East by impeding the whole peace process.

Once again the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan reiterates its full support for the Palestinian people in respect of their right to self-determination and statehood. It believes that without recognition of this right there can be no peace in the region. We call upon Israel to recognize the truth of the situation and to join the international community in celebrating its successes rather than its failures. The United Nations cannot by itself accomplish the objective of securing the right of the people of Palestine. It is the sincerity of Member States in respect of their

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

commitments arising out of adherence to the principles of the Charter and the resolutions of this world family that will enable our Organization effectively to serve the cause of justice, world peace, respect for human rights, progress and human dignity.

We call upon Israel to recognize that the right of the Palestinians cannot be violated and ignored for ever. Before it celebrates its half-century the United Nations should make sure that the Palestinian people are guaranteed their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own Palestinian State. Otherwise, we shall be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations failure with regard to the Palestinian question.

Israel, as a Member of this Organization, is obliged to heed the call that the world family has been making to it for more than four decades to cooperate with the other Members and thus enable the United Nations to proclaim a successful end to 45 years of painful history, of Palestinian plight.

Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria): Since 1948, when the Middle East question was first raised in the General Assembly, numerous concerted efforts have been made by this body to find a just and lasting political solution to the problem. The numerous conferences and seminars on Palestine, together with other efforts, have helped to devise formulas for the attainment of a just a lasting peace in place of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to provide the basis for constructive diplomatic initiatives. However, all efforts have failed to achieve the desired objective, and in consequence peace has continued to elude the region.

The failure to resolve the Palestinian question - the central focus of the Middle East situation - has impinged directly not only on the peace

(Mr. Ayewah, Nigeria)

process and stability in the region, but also on international peace and security. In this connection, we note that the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and all other relevant arms of the United Nations, have been brought to bear on the international effort to achieve a peaceful resolution to the problem. Although a lasting solution to the Palestinian question has yet to be found, we cannot but commend these bodies for their perseverance in the discharge of their responsibilities and for their contributions to the peace process.

As we enter a new phase in international relations - a phase characterized by a shift from confrontation to cooperation - and witness a renewal of commitment to the solution of long-standing regional conflicts, my delegation believes that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question must be subsumed in the solution of the general Middle East question. In this respect, we continue to believe that the Palestinian question, as well as the Middle East question, can be settled only through negotiations on the basis of the relevant General Assembly resolutions and, in particular, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which, inter alia, provide for fulfilment of United Nations Charter principles.

(Mr. Ayewah, Nigeria)

Nigeria fully supports the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from Arab territories, the termination of all claims or states of belligerency, and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the region. We hope that there will be a fair and reasonable settlement of the question, starting with the return of occupied territories, the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to a homeland, and the development of the harmonious coexistence of the Arabs and the Israelis.

The quest for a lasting peace in the Middle East should be based on established principles of international law. That is why we are unable to accept the acquisition of territory by military occupation or use of force. Linked to this should be respect for the wishes of the Palestinian people to decide its own future and make its own choices, which should command the respect of all.

The international community in the recent past has demonstrated a clear desire to end regional conflicts in various parts of the world. The climate is propitious. It is therefore appropriate for the General Assembly, in cooperation with the Security Council, to strive to achieve these objectives as expeditiously as possible.

My delegation has long supported the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question, and now that a new spirit of international cooperation is creating conditions favourable to direct negotiations between the parties concerned, my delegation sincerely hopes that all the parties will seize the opportunity to achieve reconciliation. We urge all parties to take advantage of the current initiatives being made under the auspices of the United States Government, in addition to those of the United Nations, for the achievement of a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): 1992 will be remembered as a year of hope and disappointment. People throughout the world had high hopes that with the end of the cold war democracy would prevail. But this optimism has now been tempered by the tragic ethnic rivalries in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and elsewhere. Nevertheless, in certain regions there do remain glimmers of hope that long-standing differences will finally be resolved.

I dare to believe that the Middle East is just such a region. I am encouraged that the momentum created at the historic Conference in Madrid last year has been maintained. Although the pace might not seem as fast as we had hoped, bilateral and multilateral peace talks are continuing and the parties are now engaged in substantive dialogue. Japan believes that the ongoing peace process offers a precious opportunity to achieve a lasting, just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We must all take care to ensure that the opportunity is not lost.

Japan has committed itself to playing an active role in the Middle East peace process. Indeed, it has participated in the work of all five Working Groups and the Steering Committee created by the Moscow talks, in the belief that these efforts will facilitate and also complement the direct talks between the parties concerned. Japan is particularly active in the Working Group on environment, of which it is a lead co-organizer, and in the Working Groups on regional economic development, water resources and refugees, of which it is a co-organizer.

Japan is also trying to promote a positive atmosphere for the peace talks. As part of this effort, it has recently invited influential figures in the region, including Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa of Syria, and

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Mr. Hari Al-Hassan, Political Adviser to the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for a frank exchange of views on the progress of the peace process.

Japan has long insisted that efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question, at the core of which is the Palestinian issue, must be based upon United Nations resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Japan will continue to contribute to the peace process in accordance with those resolutions and hopes that the ongoing peace process, in which interim autonomy for the Palestinians is being discussed as a main agenda item, will lead to self-determination.

Japan urges the Palestinian people to prepare for such interim autonomy by strengthening the solidarity and integrity of its community. Japan is ready to cooperate with its efforts towards that goal. In addition to efforts for greater solidarity, however, the Palestinian people needs to make other preparations for its autonomy. For example, the establishment of institutions necessary for the assumption of interim autonomy will require trained administrative staffs. In response to this urgent need, Japan has offered a special administrative training programme for the Palestinian people and is now ready to enhance this programme.

However, until a peaceful settlement is reached, the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War should be strictly adhered to in the occupied territory. Thus, Japan repeats its appeal to the Israeli authorities to take measures to ensure respect for human rights and improve social and economic conditions in the occupied territory. We strongly urge all parties to refrain from activities which might jeopardize the peace process.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

In closing, I wish to reiterate Japan's hope that the parties concerned will cooperate in a step-by-step approach and take positive measures to dispel mistrust and build confidence between them. Japan will continue to work with all parties of goodwill, and once a peace settlement is achieved will support the peace-building process and the economic recovery of the Palestinian region.

Mr. NYAKYI (United Republic of Tanzania): The Arab-Israeli conflict has become so complex and intractable in the last 45 years that in a debate of this kind it is always necessary to remind ourselves where it all started. The root cause of the problem is the denial to the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights: first and foremost, their right to self-determination, including the right to run their own affairs, to independence and to the establishment of a homeland of their own; the right of displaced populations to return to their homes; and the right of a dispossessed population to the restoration of their properties or to compensation for loss. All the other manifestations of the Arab-Israeli conflict stem from this continuing injustice, which the Palestinian people have had to bear for the last 45 years. Without such a constant reminder, the temptation to accept partial solutions becomes too strong and too attractive to resist.

It has long been accepted that the United Nations has a special responsibility to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict. In addition to United Nations responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, the conflict is a direct consequence of a United Nations action.

There is no point, at this time in the history of the conflict, in engaging in a debate on the rightness or wrongness of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, popularly known as the partition resolution. What is more important and constructive at this stage is for the United Nations to endeavour to right the wrongs committed in the wake of that decision and, subsequently and most important, to work for the realization of its original aim, the establishment of two States in the region: the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. This is the very least that the United Nations can do to make amends for the wrong done to the Palestinian

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

people and to uphold a major principle enshrined in its Charter: the right of peoples to self-determination and independence.

The denial to the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination has not been the only injustice inflicted upon them. Prior to 1967, the efforts of the United Nations were directed primarily towards securing the implementation of numerous resolutions calling for respect for the right of displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and for compensation for loss resulting from Israeli actions. These resolutions remain unimplemented. Every year since its establishment in 1975, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has submitted a comprehensive report on its work. Paragraphs 22 to 30 of this year's report (A/47/35), dated 19 November 1992, make harrowing reading, as they describe the escalation in the massive violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people inflicted in 25 years of Israeli occupation. This account is a familiar litany of the acts of oppression and repression of an occupying Power that cares little for the principles of the Charter, international law or world public opinion. As long as these reprehensible Israeli practices in the occupied territories persist, Israel's professed desire to make peace and live peacefully with its Palestinian neighbours will continue to ring hollow.

To demonstrate its desire for peace, the Palestine Liberation Organization has bent over backwards to accommodate Israel. In 1988 the PLO held out the olive branch by acknowledging Israel's right to exist. Despite Israel's continued failure to reciprocate, the offer is still valid. Israel's refusal to agree to the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the ongoing multilateral talks is another example of a country continuing

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

to live in the past while the world has moved on. On the other hand, by accepting less than its rightful role in the current peace process, the Palestine Liberation Organization has provided yet another demonstration of its desire for peace. My delegation would like to congratulate the Palestine Liberation Organization for its unswerving commitment to the peace process. We take this opportunity to direct an earnest appeal to Israel to reciprocate this gesture of a genuine desire to bury the past.

A major obstacle to peace in the Middle East has been Israel's controversial policy of establishing Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. More than anything else, this policy has been a constant reminder to the Palestinian people of their worst fear: that Israel has no intention of withdrawing from the occupied territories. We welcome the change in this policy announced by the new Israeli Government immediately it came into office. We congratulate the United States of America for encouraging this change and the new Government of Israel for the courage it has demonstrated in making the change. We urge them to work to ensure that the change leads to a permanent halt to the construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

As the controversy over the settlements policy demonstrates, land has been at the centre of the Palestinian question and, indeed, of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The failure of previous Israeli Governments to concede the principle of "land for peace" was a major factor undermining the peace process. The new Israeli Government deserves to be congratulated for accepting the principle. How this change will affect Palestinian territory remains unclear. But it is a welcome change which, we are confident, will make a positive contribution to the peace process.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

Delegation after delegation has repeated from this rostrum that it is an illusion for anyone to believe that a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict can be found without adequately addressing the problem of Palestine. The elements of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, as set out in General Assembly resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988 and reaffirmed in subsequent resolutions, are well known and I need not elaborate on them here. They include Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from other occupied Arab territories as provided for in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); ensuring the security of all States in the region, including Israel; finding a permanent solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and susbsequent resolutions; dismantling Israeli settlements in Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967; and guaranteeing freedom of access to holy places and religious buildings and sites.

In pursuing these objectives, we urge the participants in the current multilateral talks on the Middle East to keep in mind the centrality of the Palestinian question, in particular the crying need for a homeland for the long-suffering Palestinian people. Just as the world could not run away from the obligation to found a home for the rejected and persecuted Jewish population after the Second World War, it cannot run away today from its responsibility to establish a home for the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

The complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict demands a comprehensive settlement. That is why many delegations, including my own, have consistently supported the long-standing proposal for an International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations involving the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization - the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - and the permanent members of the Security Council. The soundness of the proposal has been accepted by almost everybody, yet it has failed to get off the ground because of the veto that Israel continues to exercise over all movement on the conflict.

The world was led to believe that the Madrid Conference was the beginning of a process which held out the prospect of leading to an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The overwhelming support of the international community which the proposal has enjoyed and continues to enjoy today is explained by this prospect. Yet, beyond the fact of getting the parties together, little has been achieved.

We have become so accustomed to the status quo in the Middle East that we are not surprised by the conclusion recorded in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report, document A/47/716 dated 27 November 1992. As was the case last year and the year before that, the Secretary-General has been forced to conclude once again that sufficient agreement does not exist to permit the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East as envisaged by the United Nations.

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

The only hopeful sign in the report - which my delegation welcomes most warmly - is the appointment of Ambassador Chinmaya Gharekhan of India as the Secretary-General's Special Representative at the ongoing talks. We are confident that Ambassador Gharekhan will be able to bring his long experience and well-tested and much-admired diplomatic skills to bear on the frustrating situation in the Middle East.

Despite the lack of progress at the talks so far, a number of factors favour the peace process: the end of the cold war, the coming into office of a new Government in Israel, the continuing willingness on the part of the Palestine Liberation Organization to remain in the process in spite of many frustrations, the willingness of Israel's neighbours to enter into negotiations with that country, and the growing acceptance of an enhanced role for the United Nations in conflict resolution. Indeed, all these are factors that create a favourable climate for peace in the Middle East.

We urge the participants in the current talks to take advantage of this climate to make a determined effort to end the long-festering problem in the Middle East.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (interpretation from French): The General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine at a time when there are great changes occurring in the international political scene, confrontation giving way to cooperation, and there is a real will to resolve the most persistent regional conflicts. The positive events of the last few years at the international level afford a unique opportunity to break the deadlock in the Middle East, a region that has been viewed as one of the most sensitive hotbeds of tension and one of the most threatening for international peace and security.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

The question of Palestine has been and remains a matter of constant concern for the international community as a whole: the question of Palestine is in effect an issue of a people that has endured suffering, destruction and humiliation that can no longer be put into words or speeches. The wanderings of the people that has been dispossessed of its land and deprived of its most fundamental human rights, its legitimate aspirations to dignity and its own national identity are an unacceptable challenge to the conscience of humanity and the most sacred values that the United Nations represents.

However, our Organization has been making tireless efforts for decades now in the form of its many resolutions, decisions, reports and appeals of all kinds. But all these gestures of good will, all these demonstrations of wisdom and political good sense have unfortunately run up against the intransigence of Israel, which continues its policies of occupation and repression, flouting the will of the international community.

Nevertheless, the determination and courage of the Palestinian people remain unshakeable, as does its commitment to assuming in full its responsibilities within the international community. The intifadah, one of the most moving expressions of the distress and despair but, most of all, of the strong will of the Palestinian people, which yearns for justice and to exercise its inalienable rights, including the establishment of its own State on its own territory, has gained the sympathy of the international community as a whole and has shown that a people that remains true to its dignity and freedom cannot be enslaved for ever.

Despite this admirable courage, the Palestinian people is suffering under the occupation, and it will not be possible to put an end to its suffering without guaranteeing it adequate international protection under the provisions

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the protection of civilian Persons in Time of War, which Israel is duty bound to respect.

Despite all the sacrifices made by its people, the Palestinian leadership, through its specific actions, has evinced wisdom and moderation by opting for dialogue and negotiation towards a just and lasting settlement. Thus, on 15 November 1988, the Palestine National Council took historic initiaties that included the proclamation of the State of Palestine and the undertaking to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as basis for a settlement.

We did think then that the moderation and sense of its responsibilities that the Palestinian leaders had once again shown ought to pave the way to a new era of understanding, tolerance and mutual respect in the deeply afflicted region of the Middle East. However, it was still up to the other side to take this opportunity and show realism and good sense by striving seriously to establish relations of peace and good-neighbourliness.

By deciding last year to take part in the Peace Conference in Madrid, the Palestine National Council took a constructive position and proved once again that it sincerely desired to lay down the foundations for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The Arab countries, for their part, in the awareness of their responsibilities and desirous of seeing the dawning of an era of peace and justice in the region, have throughout the process approached the negotiations with pragmatism and with the necessary political will, which they had already shown during the Arab Summits in Fez in 1982 and in Casablanca in 1985 and 1989.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

The recent political changes in Israel had strengthened our hope and our conviction that a new dynamic of peace had been set in motion. Unfortunately, this hope has been dashed by the machinations of the occupying Power, which has still - despite its promises and its commitments - not renounced its policy of rapidly and methodically establishing settlements in the occupied Arab territories.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

The illegality of this policy is not likely to promote the peace process started a year ago. Indeed, attempts to impose a fait accompli through physical, demographic and geographic modifications of the occupied Arab territory, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, seriously hamper all peace initiatives and are a source of perpetual conflict in the area.

In this context the status of the Holy City of Al-Quds, cradle of the three revealed religions, must be protected in keeping with the will of the international community, which has often stated that it considers that any legislative or administrative measures and arrangements by Israel concerning this Holy City are null and void. The Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, chaired by His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco, spares no effort to preserve and protect the authentic identity of the Holy City and its spiritual heritage.

His Majesty King Hassan II stressed the city's special character during his speech of 31 January 1992 in the Security Council:

> "We understand that the Holy Places in that city are of paramount importance to Muslims, Christians and Jews. That is why the Arab and Islamic side has shown openness in all the gatherings it has held, and in particular at the Summit Conference held at Fez in 1982, displaying a spirit of cooperation and taking the first steps towards the other side. However, and to our profound regret, that openness and the initiatives taken with a view to attaining peace have been met with political immobility, with rigid positions, the use of force and the fuelling of tensions." (S/PV.3046, p. 39-40)

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

Over a year ago the peace process, launched in Madrid on the initiative of the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, gave rise to great hopes for a global solution of the crisis in the Middle East in general and of the question of Palestine in particular. The Kingdom of Morocco has already had occasion to express its optimism about the prospects for the Conference, and reiterates today its support for this process, which made possible dialogue and the opening of negotiations between all the parties to the conflict.

We see in the participation of the United Nations in this process a positive contribution to the common search for a just and lasting solution of the problem. We regret, however, that after more than a year of negotiations this process has not yet yielded any positive results, especially on the matter relating to the substance of the Palestine problem: implementing the terms of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which established the fundamental principle of land for peace.

It is high time to go beyond short-term consideration and look clearly to the future. It is high time to restore the faith of the peoples of the area and open up new prospects for prosperity and tranquillity, so that they may continue to make their invaluable contribution to the progress of mankind.

Mr. ZAMORA RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Once again, after many years of debate, the General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine, the core issue of the Middle East conflict and a question whose solution depends on the establishment of a just and lasting peace in this vital part of the world.

(Mr. Zamora Rodriguez, Cuba)

It must be said that if the question of Palestine remains unresolved and still has to be examined by the Assembly, it is because of the intransigence of the Israeli authorities. They have been encouraged by the contemptuous attitude of very powerful Members of the Organization that support them in all kinds of ways, thereby giving them the luxury of flouting numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions designed to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish their own State, or to halt the repressive and discriminatory practices perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians and other Arab populations in the occupied territories. Also unheeded are appeals for the protection of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation and appeals to Israel, as the occupying Power, to comply with its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as the calls for a final solution to the Middle East conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the principle of land for peace.

It is well known that at this time, when the Security Council has been working harder than ever - indeed, sometimes too hard - and when it is asserting itself on other situations confronting the international community, it has none the less been unable to act with equal decisiveness on this conflict, the longest-running conflict with which the United Nations has a natural involvement and in which Israel is flouting the international will and decisions of the Council. It is no secret that this double standard in the Council's conduct is not unrelated to the improper use of it by some permanent members, using their status as permanent members and their ominous veto power in that body to serve their own strategic interests and protect Israel.

(Mr. Zamora Rodriguez, Cuba)

We all remember that when the Assembly met to consider this item a year ago the negotiating process in the Middle East Peace Conference, sponsored by the United States of America and the then Soviet Union, had just begun. Although based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), it left the United Nations virtually at the margin of the process. Many of us had doubts about its chances of success, but we were assured that it was the proper course, in keeping with the new times, to move forward speedily and surely towards a lasting peace in the Middle East. We were therefore asked, in essence, to postpone any other effort that the Organization might undertake.

As we meet today, while the United Nations has achieved a modest participation in the process, with the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the very distinguished, capable and skilled Ambassador of India, Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan, in the multilateral talks, we must note the lack of concrete progress due to continued Israeli intransigence, intransigence that it has shown in other contexts.

The lack of tangible results to date is not very encouraging, but we would like a way to be found to cut the Gordian knot that has so far prevented progress towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. Because of our desire for real progress, we do not wish to put forward judgements that might seem hasty. However, we believe that the United Nations should play an increased role in order to advance the negotiations because our Organization has a historical link to, and responsibility for, the question of Palestine, the core issue of the conflict. It can neither disavow nor abandon them.

(Mr. Zamora Rodriguez, Cuba)

My delegation also continues to support the convening, at an appropriate time, of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, as advocated in paragraph 2 of resolution 46/75.

Moreover, we consider that the Assembly should call on the Security Council to implement its own resolutions on the question of Palestine, including those on the safety and protection of the population of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and on compliance by Israel with its obligations in that connection as occupying Power.

The Palestinian people, represented in a worthy manner by the Palestine Liberation Organization, continues to be the victim of the violation of its most fundamental rights. The United Nations is duty-bound to work to enable it fully to exercise those rights, including the right to establish a State of its own; the Organization must also give it the protection it needs from the cruel conditions imposed on it by the occupying Power.

The question of Palestine is at the very core of the Middle East conflict. Peace in that region is indivisible and must be based on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the conflict, under United Nations auspices and achieved through means guaranteeing the complete and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Palestinian territories it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights, the occupying Power's annexation of which is totally illegal and must therefore be deemed void and without legal force. There must also be an end to Israel's occupation of territory in southern Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

(Mr. Zamora Rodriguez, Cuba)

At a time when efforts are under way to reach a negotiated solution to the Middle East conflict, Israel's racist and discriminatory practices against the indigenous population in the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories continue in violation of the legitimate rights of the inhabitants of those territories. Israel also persists in its expansionist policy, which poses a threat to the maintenance of peace and security in the region. No State should provide assistance to the Israeli regime while that policy and those practices continue in bald defiance of the United Nations and open violation of international law.

The future of the Palestinian people will depend to a large extent on the collective will we demonstrate. All the States represented here owe that people an enormous debt of admiration and bear a great responsibility towards it.

The PRESIDENT: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 30 at a later date to be announced in the Journal.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.